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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to assist day care agencies in the development of an orientation program for new staff. The first section of the guide provides a list of questions that should be considered when deciding what information new staff should know. Questions are related to the following six areas: introductory tour of the school; school organization and policy; health and safety; nutrition and food services; center philosophy and practice; and grievance procedures. The second section of the guide offers procedural suggestions for conducting the orientation program, including a brief summary of the experiences of two day care centers where the orientation outline was used on an experimental basis. The guide also includes a short bibliography of articles, pamphlets, and books intended to contribute to an understanding of some of the issues that often arise during staff orientation. (Author/MP)

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ORIENTATION FOR DAY CARE CENTER STAFF

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

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INTRODUCTION

The enclosed packet is designed to assist agencies in the development of an Orientation program for new staff. It is divided into two sections. The first section is a list of questions that should be considered in deciding what information is important for staff to know when starting out. The second section offers procedural suggestions, including a brief summary of the experiences of two day care centers who experimented with the use of the orientation outline. It also includes a short bibliography of articles, pamphlets, and books which may contribute to an understanding of some of the issues that often arise during staff orientation. The committee plans to continue developing this bibliography. It will include annotation as well as a more extensive list of readings. This format was selected as a way of encouraging reflection around common concerns while not inhibiting its flexibility for specific programs.

We all face similar problems in the process of facilitating the growth and development of children while meeting the varying needs of parents and staff. The solutions to these problems, however, have to come from those who understand the specific conditions involved. Thus, it is the desire of the authors of this packet to provide you with resources to help you make thoughtful decisions about your orientation of new staff. A successful and complete orientation process is doubly valuable. First, it can set the tone for two-way communication with new staff. Second, it can help administrators insure quality care by supplying new staff with an understanding of their role and responsibilities. Problems which often arise due to a lack of shared definitions around role, responsibility, and requirements may be avoided.

It is advisable to consider not only the content for staff orientation but also the process. New staff members not only have differences in learning style but also finite saturation points. For these reasons it is important to be aware of not giving too much information at once and to communicate through as many different modes as possible. Some information can be best communicated in the written form. Communicating other information requires the give and take of face-to-face contact. Films and tapes offer another format.

Making the orientation process a positive experience for all those involved requires that the person(s) responsible for orienting new staff not only develop a varied presentation but also adapt that presentation to the needs and skills of the individuals involved. Efforts should be made to understand the point of view of a new person who may feel deluged by information or who may not understand its long-term relevance to their working role. This adds confusion for those conducting the orientation because they cannot rely on specific procedures. As we have all learned about children, everyone is a distinct individual. Planning gives the orienter a base from which to be flexible, and is important for insuring that content is not neglected. Using the plan flexibly depends on the skill and observation power of the orienter. The experiences of several progams in instituting an orientation program built out of the enclosed material are included in the second section. They are not intended as models but as guides - one more piece of information to be utilized in making your own decisions.

The arrangements of these materials in a binder is to encourage your additions, including modifications of the outline, records of your experiences and copies of relevant articles and bibliographies and to also allow for the addition of the annotated bibliography. We encourage you to share with us your ideas and experiences around the use of these materials so that we may continue to develop more relevant materials for new staff orientation.

QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ORIENTATION OF NEW DAY CARE CENTER STAFF

I. Introductory

☐ A. Has there been a tour of the physical plant?

__ 1. Where are adult and child bathrooms?
__ 2. Where are classroom supplies stored?
__ 3. Where is first aid equipment?
__ 4. Where are extra clothes stored?
__ 5. Is there a staff room?
__ 6. Are there special telephones for staff use? Are there any rules about telephone use?
__ 7. What are the center opening and closing procedures?

☐ B. Has the new person been introduced to all staff members?

☐ C. Has the new person been able to spend time observing in the classroom (s)?

II. Organizational

☐ A. Have you addressed supervisory issues?

__ 1. Who is new persons supervisor?
__ 2. When/where/how will supervision happen?

☐ B. Have you briefly explained agency's organizational structure and funding sources?

__ 1. To whom does the new staff person go for what?
__ 2. What outside classroom responsibilities are expected?

☐ C. Have you clearly explained personnel policy?

___ 1. Salary and potential increments?
___ 2. Benefits?
___ 3. Probationary periods?
___ 4. Expectations concerning dress?
___ 5. Rules concerning arrival, departure and break times?
___ 6. How will staff member be evaluated?
___ 7. Have you informed your staff about agency grievance procedures?

☐ D. Have you explained agency policy regarding tobacco, drugs, and alcohol?

☐ E. Have you given new employee a written job description and a written job description of their supervisor?

☐ F. Have you made staff aware of licensing requirements? e.g. annual medical exams, etc.

☐ G. Have you discussed insurance limitations?

__ 1. Are there areas that are out-of-bounds to children?
__ 2. Are there rules for supervision on field trips?
__ 3. Are there rules concerning who transports children in what vehicles?
__ 4. Are there policies concerning who may take children out of the center?

☐ H. Have you explained legal responsibilities and agency policy concerning the reporting of child abuse and neglect?

☐ I. Are staff aware of the requirement of confidentiality and parental access to child records?

__ 1. What is inappropriate for discussion outside the center?
__ 2. What kinds of comments are not appropriate to parents or other staff?
__ 3. Do staff understand the legal and ethical foundation of your policy on confidentiality?

III. Health and Safety

☐ A. Are new staff made aware of accessibility and location of emergency medical information?

☐ B. Does staff receive first aid training?

☐ C. Are all staff made aware of emergency medical procedures (agency practice)?

__ 1. Poison
__ 2. Accidents
__ 3. Sudden illness

☐ D. Do you explain agency policy concerning medication?

__ 1. When are staff allowed to administer medication?
__ 2. Who is responsible for administering medication?
__ 3. What procedures are used to communicate information about medications given or to be given?
__ 4. Are staff aware of proper storage location for medication?

☐ E. Are evacuation procedures explained as well as clearly posted?

☐ F. Have agency policies regarding child illness heen explained?

___ 1. When should children be readmitted after an illness?
___ 2. What are the indications used for daily acceptance or non/acceptance due to illness? (e.g. fever, green mucous...)
___ 3. How is child illness dealt with during the day? When are parents notified? By Whom? Where are parent and emergency contact phone numbers kept?
___ 4. Are new staff oriented to what child behaviors and/or symptoms may require health care?
___ 5. Are staff told about resources or resource people who could help with medical questions? (Do you have a house doctor or nurse?)
___ 6. Are staffaware of the special health needs of children in the program.
a. How is this information shared and updated?

☐ G. Are all staff aware of indoor and outdoor safety rules of the agency and particular classroom?

☐ H. Is staff given guidance about when it is inadvisable to report for work?
___ 1. How do you call in sick?

IV. Nutrition and Food Service

☐ A. Are you subject to any regulations concerning food preparation and service that new staff should be aware of?
___ 1. Have you made staff aware that legally food may not be withheld as punishment?

☐ B. Do you make staff aware of the significance of your nutritional program?

☐ C. Are there any agency scheduling problems or food service policies that staff should be aware of?

___ 1. Do you have any guidelines about what or when staff may eat or drink?
___ 2. Are there any policies or practices around how much children must/should eat?
___ 3. Do you serve family style, practice portion control, or allow room staff to make this decision?
___ 4. Do you share guidelines for appropriate adult and child behavior at mealtimes?
___ 5. Where are snack foods kept?
___ 6. What are the mealtime and snack procedures?

V. Center philosophy and practice

☐ A. Do you have clear educational philosophy that is communicated to new staff?

☐ B. How is that philosophy manifested?

___ 1. How is curriculum planned? Why?
___ 2. How is the classroom day organized? Why?
___ 3. Are there regularly scheduled activities that new staff should be aware of (e.g. swimming, field trips, library...)
___ 4. Do you have general guidelines for child behavior and discipline? Why?
___ 5. Do your classrooms have standing rules about the use of classroom materials and equipment? Why?
___ 6. Do you have guidelines either explicit or implied for teacher behavior in the classroom? Why?

☐ C. Do you have a center policy or philosophy around parent involvment?

___ 1. Are staff expected to communicate with parents? When? How often? About what sorts of things?
___ 2. Are parents involved in center program and/or policy decisions? How?
___ 3. Are parents involved in the classroom program? How?
___ 4. How are staff made aware of their responsibility to parents?
___ 5. Are staff aware of and/or expected to participate in parent orientation?
___ 6. Are there rules about who may pick up children? Are there any particular problems with this?

☐ D. Are staff informed of the centers relationship to the community?

___ 1. Are staff expected to be involved in relating to the community?
___ 2. Are there specific issues concerning confidentiality that should be addressed?
___ 3. Are staff made aware of funding sources within the community?

☐ E. Are staff informed of agency's responsibility for ongoing training and of its availability?

☐ F. Have you informed staff of any special health, nutritional or developmental needs of the children to whom they are assigned?

___1. Do you have agency procedures for consultation and/or referral?
___2. What are staff responsibilities?

VI. Grievance

☐ A. Have you informed staff about your agency grievance procedures?

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCEDURES

Perhaps, while reading the Orientation Outline, you made written or mental notes to yourself about changes you would like to make in order or content. You also may have thought about various individuals who could assist you in the orientation or times when the process could be carried out. We chose to have our procedural suggestions follow rather than precede your reading of the outline so that our ideas would not encumber your initial responses. Now, though, we would like to offer the following suggestions. While you may already have thought of them, they seem crucial to us for constructive orientation and future ease of operation.

1. It is important to share the outline or your variation of it with presently employed staff. They, too, may need answers to the questions posed. Their needs will give guidance to you about procedural and policy issues which may need clarification within the program. Also, they may offer advice for further revision or reordering. Together you may choose to rearrange the outline to meet the needs of the program more completely. Sharing responsibility for its implementation encourages investment in its outcome. Consulting with staff emphasizes to them the value of their ideas and their efforts to the program as a whole.

2. It is essential to consider in advance when each piece of information is most necessary and valuable. As an obvious example, a building tour should probably be conducted at the beginning. Each time you repeat the orientation process, planning the timing and sequence for your next orientation will be easier.

3. We advise providing an outline/checklist to each new staff member at the beginning of the formal orientation. This gives the employee an idea of what to expect. Also, it can help to integrate the pieces of information being given into a general picture of the agency. This is particularly important when so many details must be presented so quickly.

By comparing checklists during the orientaion process areas of misunderstanding or lack of clarity can be identified before problems emerge.

4. It is important for the orienter to listen during the orientation process. It is easy to get caught up in the amount of information you have to communicate. To efficiently impart that information, however, you need to know how you are being received. This requires listening and observation skills. As well, modelling and nurturing of a working relationship can pay great dividends.

5. It would be valuable for new staff to meet regularly with administrators/supervisors either as individuals or in groups for a period of time following the initial orientation. The issues and topics that they raise for discussion in this ongoing setting provide new ideas for continuing staff orientation and development, as well as fostering continuing staff communication.

We expect that each use of the orientation outline will provide the opportunity for its further development and modification. Making it work for your program is important. Initially, it may appear that orientation is narrowly focused on fact and procedure. However, orientation well done can be the beginning of a growth process for staff and administrators. Administrators willgain information about teacher's needs for further development. And, staff will feel the agency interest and commitment toward giving them the support they need to do their jobs better.

Riverview Day Care Center

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STAFF ORIENTATION

Pilot Project
Riverview Day Care Center, Inc.
Brunswick, Maine

Elizabeth A. Andrews
Director

August/September, 1980

Staff Orientation
Pilot Project

Orientation of Current Staff:

In order to implement an orientation-for-new-staff procedure as suggested by the Orientation Packet, it was first necessary to establish a base line for existing staff. Therefore, on August 28 and 29, 1980, an all staff workshop was set up at Riverview Day Care Center.

On the first workshop day, all staff at Riverview, both professional and support, were assembled. The entire morning was spent in reviewing by the director the following components of the draft orientation packet:

Section I, A 3 to 7, B;
Section II, A, D, F;
Section III, D, E, H;
Section IV.

In addition to this discussion, those staff members who had not yet received one were given an Employee Packet, written particularly for Riverview. This packet contains: W-4 form, Insurance form, Medical form, Information form, and Time Sheet, as well as the written Personnel Policies, written Amendments to the policies, a Statement of Philosophy of Riverview, an outline of history, a current pamphlet, a list of staff and their phone numbers, and the Insurance booklet. These were accompanied by a verbal statement by the director that these policies were in effect, but under review by the Board of Directors. They were not read or discussed at that time.

On the second workshop day, two hours of the afternoon were set aside to further orientate professional staff. The following sections were discussed and procedures verified.

Section I, A 2
Section II, D, G, H, I;
Section III, A, F, G;
Section IV, A, C;
Section V, A, B 1 to 3, C, E, F.

It was further determined at this session that Section II, H should be addressed by this agency and a procedure for doing this was decided upon.

All sections of the Orientation Packet not discussed in these two sessions need further clarification or are not applicable to Riverview.

Reactions of Staff to this procedure were mostly favorable. However, such a lengthy review in just two sessions was a bit overwhelming. Some information may also have been lost. It would not appear to be advisable to use this same procedure with new or fairly new staff, but could be used, perhaps in several sessions, with staff already well familiar with the program.

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Field Testing Summary
Staff Orientation Procedure

St. Elizabeth's Child Development Center has been an eager participant in the field testing of the Orientation Procedures. We hope that our initial experience will help refine the tool and help others decide how they are going to use it.

Our staff contributed to the development of the initial draft by developing lists of what we'd like a new worker to know at the end of one week, at the end of six months, and at the end of one year. We also talked among ourselves as to the uses of an orientation tool. The general consensus was that it would be extremely valuable because it would provide a systematic way to communicate to new workers those things that we often overlook with new employees as well as those things we consider important. Also, we agreed that the tool would be extremely valuable for CETA workers, volunteers, and others in addition to regular employees.

The initial Draft of the Orientation Procedures was received very positively because of it's comprehensive approach. We found ourselves saying, "I wouldn't have thought of that." But, we were also abit overwhelmed by the large amounts of material covered. So, we began by organizing the various topics into a procedure which would be manageable and meaningful to our specific situation.

We developed a procedure for our use which can be summarized by this outline:

I. Hiring Interview

The hiring interview is conducted by the program director with the new employee before the new worker begins in the classroom. It's purpose is to clarify the job being offered by reviewing regulations, program financial information, benefits, organization of the center and other pertinent information.

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II. Initial Orientation

The initial orientation is the responsibility of the new worker's superior. An integral part of this step is for the supervisor to introduce the new worker to other staff and establish a supportive tone. There are 3 parts to the Initial Orientation.

A. Tour the Building

The new employee is taken on a walking tour of the building. Several of the items listed in the original draft orientation procedure are reviewed during this tour.

B. Tour the Classroom

The supervisor takes the new worker on an in-depth tour of the new worker's classroom. Basic information is shared and several philosophical issues are presented for initial consideration.

C. Explain Basic Procedures

There are many basic procedures which professional responsibility demands be clearly presented to new staff. By listing approximately 20 of these issues and checking them off as we proceed, we assure ourselves that we have fulfilled our responsibilities.

III. On-Going Orientation

There are many complex issues involved in working with preschoolers. These issues cannot be adequately dealt with in a one time talk with a new worker. The "On-Going Orientation" category deals with these philosophical areas. We have already dealt with "basic" and "survival" information sharing and are now getting into longer term staff development. The 6 areas we have initially defined are:

1. Looking at the Whole Child
2. Nutrition
3. Program Philosophy and Practice
4. Special Needs
5. Individual Strengths and Needs of Children
6. Parent Involvement

Obviously these are arbitrary divisions which are open to considerable interpretation. But, this is a procedure which allows us to adapt to meet our specific needs as we see them.

FEEDBACK ON INITIAL TRIALS

Five people participated in the initial trials of this procedure - 2 teachers, 2 new full-time classroom assistants, and a new CETA aide. Our general response to the experience is a very enthusiastic endorsement. We found the procedure generally easy to use, flexible, thorough, and reassuring because, as one new worker said, "alot of stuff was covered that probably wouldn't have been otherwise". The very specific nature of the first parts of the orientation seemed really appropriate. The less specific and more complex nature of the later parts of the orientation were viewed as so pertinent and so comprehensive that at least one classroom is considering a yearly review at the classroom level.

Our experience indicates that each orientation situation presents different variables. We found that each new worker brought individual skill levels to the orientation and therefore required a uniquely tailored procedure. Specifically, we found that it was not appropriate for an unexperienced CETA worker and a beginning worker trained in child development at college to be oriented together because of the different levels of prior experience they brought to the program. We also concluded that picking and choosing among the various issues in the orientation was appropriate based on the individual being oriented.

Time, as is always the case in child care, was a major variable. The initial sessions were dealt with differently by our staff. One teacher met with her new worker for a half hour a day for the first week, followed by a half hour per week after that. This led to an on-going informal follow-up procedure which involved dealing with issues as they arose. The other teacher met once a week for an hour with her new worker. The consensus of that pair was that an hour was a reasonable time but that oversaturation with the information was a potential problem. All agreed that finding the time was difficult and required flexibility and a commitment to the orientation.

The St. Elizabeth's staff participated in this first pilot project during the summer of 1980. As we hope is obvious by the above remarks, we found it to be a valuable addition to our program and a great way to establish relationships and set tone with new workers. We shall definitely be refining and improving our approach in the future.

NK/jat

9/26/80

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